



Approved For Release 2003/03/06 : CIA-RDP80B01676R000800040016-5

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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

8 August 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CHAIRMAN, UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

SUBJECT: Intelligence Capability as Related to Berlin Contingency Planning
(C)

1. In connection with current Berlin contingency planning, it has become apparent that there will be an increasingly critical need for precise and timely knowledge of Soviet military preparations and readiness. This knowledge will become an especially important ingredient of U.S. and Allied planning and decision-making the closer we move to a crisis situation, although it will also be highly useful in the context of any negotiating situation over Berlin in which we may find ourselves. The ability to discriminate between Soviet military moves designed as pressure tactics and moves which represent genuine preparation for hostilities will -- if attainable -- be of signal importance to U.S. planning and decision.

2. In light of the above, the Office of International Security Affairs has raised the following related questions:

a. To what extent can we count on the intelligence resources available to us to provide precise and timely information on Soviet military moves and readiness in a tightening Berlin crisis situation? For example, will we be able to determine the deployment and readiness status of Soviet missile forces -- launching location, whether missiles are on pads, in depots, in transit, etc.? As another example, will we be able to determine whether Soviet forces in the Central Europe area are preparing for employment of nuclear as well as conventional weapons? (These are but two examples of numerous factors on which accurate and timely information will be required.)

b. To the extent that significant gaps in our capabilities to satisfy information requirements appear likely to arise in answer to 2a., above, what steps can and should be taken between now and this autumn to improve the situation? The answer should identify not only resources and actions applicable

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to the problem, but also areas in which major policy decisions may need to be addressed -- for example, conditions under which close peripheral or overflight reconnaissance may become necessary.

3. It is requested that the questions above, together with any related considerations which appear pertinent, be considered by USIB, with a view toward recommending appropriate action and policy decision at an early date.

GRAVES B. ERSKINE
General, USMC (Ret.)
Assistant to the
Secretary of Defense
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SOURCE	Defense	CIA CONTROL NO.
DOC. NO.		172992
DOC. DATE	8 August 61	DATE DOCUMENT RECEIVED
COPY NO.	#2	21 Aug 61
NUMBER OF PAGES	2t	LOGGED BY
NUMBER OF ATTACHMENTS	none	emg/er

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